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Articles in Today's Clips Monday, October 16, 2006

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Charges reinstated against parents in New Year's Eve death of baby

Published Sunday, October 15, 2006 4:35:23 PM Central Time

By MARGARET LEVRA

Globe Staff Writer

BESSEMER -- Charges against Richard Shinaway, 25, of Ironwood, in connection with the New Year's Eve death of his 6-week-old daughter, were re-instated this week by Gogebic County Circuit Court Judge Roy Gotham.

Both Shinaway and his 23-year-old girlfriend, Shannan Peterson, were originally charged with child abuse-second degree and involuntary manslaughter, stemming from the smothering death of their infant daughter, Madisen.

Second-degree child abuse carries a maximum penalty of four years in prison. Involuntary manslaughter carries a maximum of 15 years in prison.

Following an extensive preliminary examination in May, Gogebic County District Court Judge Anders B Tingstad ruled that all charges would be dismissed against Shinaway and that Peterson would be bound over on the child abuse charge.

Gotham indicated he had given the case more thought than any case in years. After an extensive review of legal points, Gotham agreed with Prosecutor Richard Adams that the District Court had abused its discretion in not ruling on the people's theory that resuming caretaker roles for a 6-week-old child, when each was intoxicated by alcohol and drugs, and when each knew the other was in the same shape, was grossly negligent.

Gotham found the prosecution had introduced sufficient evidence to provide the probable cause

needed to bind the charges over to circuit court for trial on the people's theories, Adams said.

Adams appealed Tingstad's decision on July 25, arguing both parents should have been bound over on child abuse and involuntary manslaughter charges, and that Tingstad had committed an abuse of discretion in refusing to do so.

Tingstad centered his decision on evidence that suggested which parent had brought the child to bed, Adams said.

The couple took the baby to bed with them after returning home on New Year's Eve. The baby was later found dead. In May, Dr. Charles Iknayan, who also serves as pathologist at Grand View Hospital, said his examination of the body and related police reports led him to believe the baby was smothered "by overlay" of one or both of her parents.

On Tuesday, Gotham heard oral arguments from public defender James McKenzie from Bessemer, representing Shinaway, and Ironwood attorney Michael Pope, defending Peterson.

Gotham denied a defense motion to exclude the testimony of protective services worker Chanda Corullo, who interviewed both parents at the hospital.

The defense argued the communications were privileged under Michigan law.

Adams argued that Corullo had flown "true colors" by informing the parents she was assisting the police in the investigation of the case and that a social worker-client relationship was not established.

Gotham agreed, ruling her testimony was admissible.

The judge granted a motion by Pope for appointment of experts to review autopsy conclusions and alcohol and drug determinations by the Michigan State Police crime lab.

A trial scheduling conference will be set.

Testimony at the preliminary in May revealed that both Shinaway and Peterson had relatively low levels of alcohol in their blood, and that both had been smoking marijuana.



Mother admits ignoring molestation

Saturday, October 14, 2006

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

ALLEGAN COUNTY -- The mother of four children victimized in one of the county's worst child-abuse cases admitted Friday she ignored her young daughter's complaints that her father molested her.

The abuse was documented in some of the 20,000 images of child pornography found in an Allegan-area home shared by two families, sheriff's detectives said.

In pleading guilty to second-degree child abuse, Melissa Rupert, 27, said she failed to protect her then-8-year-old daughter from the girl's father, James Rupert, 27.

"(She) did tell me about James harming her sexually, and I didn't listen to her," Rupert told Allegan County Circuit Judge George Corsiglia.

"She told me that James had touched her in her private area," she said. "In hindsight, I should have listened to her because of events that occurred after she told me."

She and her husband earlier relinquished parental rights to the children.

Seven children, ages 9 and younger, lived in the house in Valley Township.

James Rupert is serving 17 1/2 to 50 years in prison for first-degree sexual assault. His father, Ronald Rupert, is serving 23 to 50 years in prison on three charges of first-degree sexual assault. Isaac Newton Kelly, 74, the great-grandfather of children in the other family, was sentenced earlier to 75 days in jail for possessing child pornography. Police found one photo on his computer, but said it did not involve children in the house. His attorney said he was unaware of the abuse.

The charges relate to abuse from October 2005 through February 2006.

Melissa Rupert, a graduate of Bangor High School, said her daughter told her about abuse while the family lived in Van Buren County's Breedsville in 2003.

The charges focused on only one child. Seven other charges -- second-degree child abuse and being an accessory to a felony -- will be dismissed at sentencing.

She faces up to four years in prison when sentenced Dec. 1.

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Awareness sessions to prevent child sexual abuse to be offered across U.P.

Ironwood Daily Globe

Published Sunday, October 15, 2006 4:35:20 PM Central Time

MARQUETTE -- The Catholic Diocese of Marquette is requiring new clergy, as well as diocesan, parish and Catholic school employees and volunteers who have regular contact with children or youth, or are in a position to observe those who do, to attend an awareness session for the prevention of child sexual abuse.

The free session, called Protecting God's Children for Adults, is being offered at various sites and on different dates throughout the Upper Peninsula from now until February 2007 (the schedule follows by vicariate).

Anyone who plans to work or volunteer with children or youth in the coming year and has not yet taken the training must take it during this time period. Interested persons in the local community are also welcome to attend.

Participants will learn the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse and five easy steps people can take to prevent that abuse.

People are asked to register for the awareness session via the Internet. Log on to www.virtusonline.org, click on the yellow Registration link on the left hand side of the page, enter the password, "Trust," and follow the instructions for registering for a Protecting God's Children awareness session.

Those who do not have access to a computer are asked to contact their parish or school safe environment coordinator.

In addition to participating in the three-hour workshop and completing online training, volunteers and employees must complete an authorization form for a criminal history background check.

This awareness session for employees and volunteers is part of the diocese's safe environment program, which has two other components: a program for parents and guardians, and another for children.

These preventive measures are required by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People that was adopted in 2002.

Classes and locations are as follows:

St. Joseph & St. Patrick Vicariate

--Thursday, Oct. 19, 6:30-9:30 p.m. EST, St. Anne Parish Hall, Escanaba.

--Thursday, Nov. 9, 6-9 p.m. EDT, Holy Name School, Escanaba.

--Monday, Nov. 13, 6-9 p.m. EDT, St. Francis de Sales School, Manistique.

--Thursday, Jan. 18, 6:30-9:30 p.m. EDT, St. Charles Borromeo Parish Hall, Rapid River.

St. Peter Cathedral Vicariate

--Tuesday, Oct. 24, 6-9 p.m. EST, St. Peter Cathedral Media Room, Marquette.

--Thursday, Jan. 25, 6-9 p.m. EDT, St. Joseph Parish, Ishpeming.

Holy Name of Mary Vicariate

--Monday, Oct. 30, 6-9 p.m. EDT, St. Joseph Parish, Rudyard.

--Thursday, Nov. 9, 6-9 p.m. EDT, St. Mary School, Sault Ste. Marie.

St. John Neumann Vicariate

--Tuesday, Oct. 24, 6-9 p.m. CST, Precious Blood Parish, Stephenson.

--Mon., Nov. 6, 6-9 p.m. CDT, Menominee Catholic Central School, Menominee.

St. Mary Norway Vicariate

--Monday, Oct. 9, 6:30-9:30 CST, Guardian Angels Parish, Crystal Falls.

--Thursday, Oct. 26, 6-9 p.m. CDT, Dickinson Area Catholic School, Iron Mountain.

--Monday, Nov. 6, 6-9 p.m. CDT, St. Mary Queen of Peace Parish, Kingsford.

St. Mary Rockland Vicariate

--Thursday, Nov. 9, 6-9 p.m. EDT, Holy Family Parish, Ontonagon.

--Monday, Jan. 15, 6-9 p.m. CDT, All Saints Academy, Ironwood.

--Monday, Feb. 5, 6-9 p.m. EDT, Sacred Heart Parish, Ewen.

The Most Holy Name of Jesus Vicariate

--Thursday, Oct. 12, 6-9 p.m. ET, Sacred Heart Church, Calumet.

--Wednesday, Oct. 18, 5-8 p.m. ET, Sacred Heart School, L'Anse.

--Monday, Oct. 23, 6-9 p.m. ET, St. Ignatius Loyola Parish, Houghton.

Journey to freedom: Talking about abuse helped woman start new life of freedom

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac news

Pam Brown took a deep breath, paused, and then spoke in a soft, cautious voice.

"He died," she said. "He cannot hurt me anymore. That's why I'm on top of the world."

She was free now, free to finally tell the story she could not tell her first husband - a story she kept from her four daughters. But once told, it was a story that helped heal not only herself, but her children too.

Pam Brown was sexually abused. And even though the death of her abuser allows her to feel free for the first time in 50 years - she is still unsure of her worth.

"Three years ago," she said to a group of 70 people at the Healing Private Wounds seminar, "I attended health department classes for women. They told us to write five nice things about ourselves. I couldn't think of one thing. To this day I can't write anything nice about myself."

When Brown stumbled across Shirley Petersen's book "The Whisper," reading it was so emotional she couldn't get through the first page. She contacted Petersen and signed up for her Healing Private Wounds support group.

In a twist of fate, on the first day of the meetings, her father lay dying and she sat with her abuser, comforting him on his deathbed.

After his death, Brown gathered the strength to tell her children. Finally, they understood their mother's emotional distance, her inability to draw them close and hug them.

Kristin Tanner, 25, looked at her mother with pride.

"I am so proud of my mom," she said. "If she can't tell herself she's beautiful, I can tell her. I wish she had told us sooner. I have a lot of disappointment in my grandpa. My images of him are tarnished. I'm still angry."

Looking back, Brown remembered when she first told the story out loud in her new support group.

"I had to talk with the lights out," she recalled. "And today I had to force myself to talk."

With her new strength and confidence, Brown accepted an invitation to sit on a panel with three other victims of sexual abuse and speak publicly about her ordeal in a "Healing Private Wounds" seminar.

She told the group that her abuse started when she was 4 and continued through her childhood and teenage years.

"I feel stupid," she sighed through her tears. "I didn't know the word incest. Why wasn't God there? I kept this in all these years. He can't hurt me anymore. That's why I'm on top of the world."

"I'm living my life for the first time. I am finally free of my shame," she said with hesitation, confessing she is left with one fear.

"I'm afraid to go to heaven," she confided. "What if I see him there? I saw him reach for God when he died. I took care of him. Now it's bothering me."

Family therapist Sheila Johnson, who helped present the seminar, works with victims of sexual abuse in her practice near Chicago.

"Tell your story," she told the seminar guests. "That's the first step. There are consequences to not telling your story." Abuse victims who do not tell, she explained, will suffer many of the following: anger, trust issues, perfectionism, need to be in control, depression, addictions, co-dependency and health issues.

To learn more about the Healing Private Wounds support groups, contact Shirley Petersen at sunsetlane@charter.net.

Your Local Connection

Last year Shirley Petersen published a book called "The Whisper" about being sexually abused by her father, a prominent minister. The goal of telling her story was to share her healing journey to freedom, including 28 practical steps to overcome sexual abuse.

After her book was published, women sought help from Petersen and she created a 10-week "Grow Group" or support group for victims of sexual abuse. On Oct. 7, Petersen offered her first "Healing Private Wounds" seminar to the public, a six-hour session geared to help heal victims of sexual abuse.

For more information call 775-6804 or write to Shirley at sunsetlane@charter.net.



Police cracking down on chat room predators

Of The Oakland Press

He called himself Easy Hiker online and was intensely interested in hooking up with a 14-year-old girl he'd encountered in a chat room.

What Hiker - a man from Walled Lake - didn't know was that the girl was really Frank Mostek, a 40-something detective sergeant with the Waterford Township police, who had been chatting online with the child predator.

Mostek, with assistance from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, agreed to meet Hiker at a movie theater and officers arrested him before he ever entered the building.

"We took his computer and verified the information I sent went to him," Mostek said.

"He was convicted, he pled guilty and went to prison."

Area police warn online predators and instant-message senders - people such as former Florida U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, who was recently disgraced in a scandal involving sexual advances toward pages - that they may be the ones at the other end of the conversation.

Many area police departments are becoming more sophisticated when it comes to catching predators using their computers for luring children and committing other cyber crimes.

The Sheriff's Office has three officers specifically dedicated to its Computer Crimes Unit, part of its Technical Services division.

The office reports computer-related crimes are among the fastest-growing offenses in the nation. During 2004, the last year data was compiled, the sheriff's team obtained and served 36 search warrants and nine arrest warrants during the year.

Police agencies report they are becoming more sophisticated in

their abilities to trace back e-mail and even instant messages.

"People aren't truly as anonymous as they think they are," Mostek said.

Troy police are both proactive and reactive when it comes to computer crimes, said Charles Craft, the city's police chief.

"We're monitoring Web sites that have come to our attention, ones that are promoting illegal activity and impacting Troy," he said.

"We're also reactive, responding to complaints such as parents calling about kids involved in (an illegal) computer relationship."

Det. James Mork with the Troy police handles the city's computer-related crime cases in areas such as fraud, predators enticing children and child porn.

"Almost every crime has an element of Internet activity or digital media now," Mork said.

Last year, he was called in to do a computer search on the Leila Armin murder case.

Armin was killed June 16, 2005, by her boyfriend, Amir Aziz Shahideh, who beat the 20-year-old woman with a baseball bat and stabbed her to death.

"We looked at the computers after the murder to see if there was any reason for the crime," Mork said. "What searches did he do, did they have arguments over e-mail?"

In the end, the exam didn't bring up any evidence of what had gone wrong between the two.

The Internet also has given criminals new ways to profit from fraud.

Mostek said he remembered a case in which complaints were coming in about diamonds offered for sale on eBay that were paid for, but never delivered.

By issuing search warrants to eBay, he was able to trace back messages to a Waterford man who had scammed people out of \$75,000 in nine states.

"We examined his computer and found he was guy doing the selling," Mostek said.

"He ended up pleading guilty. He stopped that nonsense and had to pay back all those people."

In his efforts to lure young men serving as pages, Foley sent lurid instant messages.

But those quick comments don't evaporate into the ether, police said.

Mork has retrieved such messages.

"It depends on the program being used," he said. "In most cases with instant messaging, you need to get to the computer early and quickly."

All of the police agencies advise parents and adults that they have a responsibility when it comes to computers and children.

"They have to be more aware and teach kids to protect themselves," said Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard.

"Just as you would tell children going out in the world, it's the same with the Internet: Don't give out or post personal information; don't talk to strangers."

Bouchard estimated up to one in four children this year will be contacted by Internet predators.

"It could be through e-mail, not graphic e-mail either," he said. "If they get no response, they move on."

Kids have a separate language they use online, Bouchard said.

"POS means parents over shoulder," he said. "There's a whole lingo parents need to be part of and understand."

Police agencies often hold seminars for parents to help them learn about computer activity, and encourage police residents to call with questions.

"They need to be involved in their children's Internet activity and their life in general. No personal information should be exchanged over the Internet," he said.

"No sharing of names or posting of pictures on MySpace," he said.

"Every tidbit you give is one more clue for someone to track you and hurt you."

Mostek offered a last word to anyone sitting at a computer looking to cause trouble: "We're out there looking for you."

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Expansion, relocation of The Ark a must

Monday, October 16, 2006

With little fanfare, and no objection from the neighbors, Catholic Family Services' Ark program for troubled teens got approval from the Kalamazoo Planning Commission to relocate and expand.

The Ark, a residential program for both runaways and those teens who need to work out their issues away from their families, has salvaged the lives of countless people since it first opened in 1977. About 225 young people seek help there each year.

It is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, taking in young people ages 10 to 17 who are in family crisis and need a place to stay. Those who stay more than 24 hours need the permission of parents or guardians.

It's not a juvenile lock-up. Teenagers stay there voluntarily, where they receive group and individual counseling, along with counseling for their parents. They receive help with conflict resolution, substance abuse and other problems that are causing friction between teens and their families.

It is encouraging that there was no opposition from this neighborhood of mostly single-family homes. Two years ago, when The Ark sought more space, it had hoped to move to Eleanor Street in the Stuart Neighborhood. It had planned to demolish a house to make room for the project.

But the Historic District Commission rejected the request to tear down the house, and many neighbors objected to the Ark moving to Eleanor Street.

This community is fortunate that The Ark didn't decide to pull up stakes and move to another community. It is the only program of its kind in the six-county area it serves.

We agree with those who have said The Ark does fantastic work repairing injured young lives, and Kalamazoo should do whatever it can to keep it here.

The Ark is now on Kilgore Avenue, adjacent to Hackett Catholic Central High School. But the site has become too cramped.

We are pleased that this relocation and expansion plan has received no opposition. We are thankful that the Planning Commission approved the special-use permit.

We wish many more good years for The Ark in this community, as the program works to rescue even more young people and help them get back on the right track.

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Michigan is 38th safest state for children

Child Magazine cites weak laws for low ranking

By CASSANDRA SPRATLING
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

October 13, 2006

Michigan ranks as America's 38th safest state for raising children, according to a recently released analysis from Child magazine.

Child Editor Karen Cicero attributes Michigan's poor ranking to three key factors:

- Michigan is one of 12 states that don't have a booster seat law requiring kids of the appropriate age to ride in a booster seat. A booster seat appropriately positions the seatbelt on a child ages 4 to 8.
- Michigan has very weak laws pertaining to gun safety.
- Michigan has no laws requiring children of any age to wear a bike helmet.

The magazine's ranking resulted from a 6-month investigation of how state governments protect children against accidents and violence—the first analysis of its kind to combine the two, according to the magazine that reports the full story in its November issue.

It deemed the 10 safest states: Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Maine, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and California.

The magazine looked at 55 areas of concern including crime rates, the number of police officers and firefighters per capita, availability and quality of emergency-medicine doctors and trauma centers, injury rates for children, playground quality, protection for sex offenders and laws regulations governing booster seats, bike helmets, window guards, and school bus-crossing.

Contact CASSANDRA SPRATLING at 313-223-4580 or spratling@freepress.com.

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Govenor attends forum

Granholm speaks about universal health care plan

By **Amanda Hamon** / Editor in Chief

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2006

Governor Jennifer Granholm advocated her universal health care plan at a National Health Policy Council forum Saturday at the Convocation Center.

Originally billed as a gubernatorial debate, the Democratic Party was most heavily represented at the forum. Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos declined to attend or send a representative, NHPC officials said.

"I think my opponent has absolutely no health care plan. His health care plan, as he has said repeatedly, is to get a job. That is not a health care plan," Granholm said in a backstage interview.

According to his Web site, DeVos promises to create a modernized health care system, improve access to affordable health care and reform Medicaid.

Granholm, Congressman John Dingell (D-Mich.), Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee and a panel of health care experts spoke about the issues facing Michigan health care during the forum, which had an audience of 1,000 according to university officials.

Granholm and Dingell asserted the need for more government funding for the uninsured and under-insured. They also cited high health care costs as a detriment to Michigan employers.

"Last year, for the first time, more cars were built in Ontario than in Michigan...and the manufacturers went there because of the low health care costs to employers," Granholm.

Dingell echoed Granholm's concern and said a Canadian worker costs Detroit-based General Motors "three to four dollars less because health care over there is taken care of."

Taken from Massachusetts legislation, Granholm said her Michigan First Health Care Plan will provide premium-free insurance for those at 200 percent of poverty or below -- the equivalent of a family of four living on a salary of \$40,000 or less. She said other needy families would receive premium assistance according to their income levels.

There are 1.1 million uninsured residents in Michigan.

"We have almost 900,000 people who live in families that don't have health care, and that are working. So getting a job is not a solution to health care in Michigan," Granholm said.

The implementation of the program will depend on government funding, Granholm said. Michigan is in the last stages of applying for a \$600-million-dollar federal "mega waiver," she said.

Granholm said the state spends \$400 million on health care not matched by the federal government. She believes the federal funds request is not

unreasonable considering the goals of the program.

"We would be spending the same amount, but we would point to money that is currently being spent to pull down federal dollars," she said.

"The only barrier is to make sure we get approval for this mega waiver from the federal government, but because they have been so positive -- and because it's very similar to what they did in Massachusetts -- there should not be a barrier to getting that approval," she continued.

The program will ideally go into affect in April of next year. Granholm stressed the program would not be government-run but would allow the government to "act as a connector with private health care providers to ensure lower premiums."

After her speech, Eastern Michigan health administration professor Richard Douglass presented Granholm questions from the crowd. Two of the four questions dealt with government funding for retirement homes, and Granholm said the Michigan State Housing Development Authority is working to provide a "full array of options to allow the elderly to live in dignity."

After Granholm spoke, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee spoke about the national climate of health care.

"Some think this problem of health care can be fixed in a four-year period. This is going to require a generational cycle to fix," Huckabee said. He continued to explain the problems Arkansas, as the home of mega-corporation Wal-Mart, has faced with health care.

After the three speakers, a panel of six health experts discussed three main issues facing Michigan health care: the rising cost of insurance, the number of uninsured and the varying quality of health care across the state.

Among the panel members were Douglass, Larry Horwitz, president of the Economic Alliance for Michigan, and Hollis Turnham, former EMU lecturer and Michigan public director of paraprofessional healthcare.

The panel agreed insurance in Michigan may not be adequate for the poor, and that reform is needed to bolster the economy and protect the residents.

"The number one issue that drives [union] strikes across the nation is the issue of health care, because employers are continually needing to ask workers to front more money," Horwitz said.

A collaboration between the NHPC, the American Association of Retired Persons and the National Coalition on Health Care, the forum was one of six across the country and the only one in Michigan.

University communications official Pam Young said 1,600 people reserved tickets to the event, but the attendance could have been hurt because of the Tigers' playoff game later that day.



Survey tracking residents' health

Sunday, October 15, 2006

GREG NELSON

FOR THE SAGINAW NEWS

ITHACA -- A consulting company might call you to talk about your health.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department has hired Public Sector Consultants of Lansing to conduct a behavioral risk factor survey of Gratiot County residents through the end of the year.

The company will poll 400 people chosen randomly. The telephone surveys will take about 15 minutes, with calling taking place between Friday and Friday, Nov. 10.

"We appreciate residents taking the time to respond if they are called to participate in the survey," Health Officer Kim Singh said. "Gathering this health data about our community is crucial to helping us prioritize services and understand programs that are most needed now and in the future."

The department will conduct similar surveys in Montcalm and Clinton counties.

The most prevalent cause of death in all three counties is heart disease, Health Department statistics show. The ailment accounts for about 33 percent of all deaths in Gratiot County. Cancer is second at 17.3 percent.

Public Sector Consultants will prepare a report of its findings for release in March.

The Health Department is paying for the survey with the aid of Gratiot County Community Mental Health, the Mid-South Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency and Department of Human Services, Singh said. The total will come in at about \$30,000.

For more information about the survey, visit the Health Department's Web site at www.mmdhd.org or call 831-3610. v

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published October 15, 2006

Plenty of vaccine available for flu

By Christine Rook
Lansing State Journal

The bad news: It's flu season.

The good news: There's plenty of vaccine.

Nationally, health officials plan to dole out up to 115 million doses of influenza vaccine, an all-time high, surpassing the record 83 million doses handed out in 2003.

The vaccine will protect against the three major strains that moved this past year through the Southern Hemisphere and are expected to infect the U.S. population. There is no telling, though, how hard the strains will hit.

Last season was mild, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. In 2003-04, the illness was moderately severe.

"Flu is unpredictable," said CDC spokesman Curtis Allen. "We don't know how severe it will be."

As a result, the push is on to get as many people vaccinated as possible, particularly children.

"They are very efficient spreaders," said Dr. Dean Sienko, medical director of the Ingham County Health Department.

In response, vaccines are available, beginning Monday.

Contact Christine Rook at 377-1261 or clrook@lsj.com.

Get your shots

Clinton County

Flu shots available Nov. 2 through Nov. 14 at five locations.

- Cost: \$35
- Contact: (989) 224-2195

Eaton County

Flu shots will be available Monday through Nov. 2 at various locations in Eaton and Barry counties.

- Cost: \$25
- Contact: 541-2690

Ingham County

Flu shots available by appointment at the county health department, 5303 S. Cedar St., Lansing.

- When: 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays and Fridays and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesdays
- Cost: \$25
- Contact: 887-4300

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Monday, OCT 16, 2006

The crisis of children's unmet mental health needs

CHILD WATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman

It is a moral disgrace and practical disaster that more than nine million children—one in nine—are uninsured and that millions more are underinsured.

Many Americans already understand something about the crisis of children and families without health insurance coverage. But many may not know as much about the enormous unmet need for child mental health treatment.

Both critical and unmet health and mental health needs were laid bare by Hurricane Katrina. Since the storm, thousands of Katrina's children suffer denied the chance to share their bad memories and clear their psyches battered by loss of family members, friends, homes, schools, and neighborhoods.

Experts testified at a July Congressional hearing in New Orleans that mental health needs are a critical concern for survivors. Yet although the number of children with unresolved mental health problems has increased, there are far too few mental health professionals.

Nationally, one in five children and adolescents has a mental illness severe enough to cause some level of impairment. Only about one in three receives mental health services in any given year. Not surprisingly, poor children and children of color are overrepresented in the number of children with unmet mental health needs.

A national study of children two to 14 years old who are involved in the child welfare system, either at home or in foster care, also found that while nearly half of them had clinically significant emotional or behavioral problems, only about one-quarter received mental health treatment.

Imagine not getting the help you need when you have suffered the trauma of abuse and neglect and the trauma of being separated from family and community.

What happens to children whose mental health needs go unmet? Lack of access to and lack of availability of community-based mental health services are causing thousands of poor children to be sucked into the Cradle to Prison Pipeline.

One of the reasons there are so many children with mental health needs in the child welfare system is that many desperate families have had to turn to that system—or to the juvenile justice system—as their only chance for help. The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reports thousands of families have been forced to relinquish custody of their children to the child welfare or juvenile justice systems in hopes of getting them treatment for unmet mental health needs.

A recent Congressional study also reports that two-thirds of juvenile detention facilities in 47 states are holding children solely because they need mental health

services unavailable in their communities.

Studies also show that given the same behavioral symptoms, more Black than white youths are incarcerated and more white than Black youths are placed in mental health institutions.

This is unconscionable. How can we tolerate or justify locking up our children because our nation is unwilling to give them the help they need? Who chooses to tell a desperate parent that we won't provide treatment for a child but will provide a space in a detention center instead? It's time to change course. But our nation won't change its priorities unless a critical mass of citizens demands it. Please join our campaign to get prenatal, health, and mental health coverage for every child in 2007. And don't take no for an answer.

Marian Wright Edelman is President and Founder of the Children's Defense Fund



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Portage woman arrested after man stabbed

Monday, October 16, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

An 18-year-old Portage woman was arrested Sunday for allegedly stabbing a man she lived with after the two had confronted one another in the 6200 block of Ivywood Drive, authorities said.

Portage police found the man, an 18-year-old Portage resident, at about 11:05 a.m. after receiving a report that a person was injured and requesting to go to the hospital, according to a news release. The man, whose name was not released, was treated at Bronson Methodist Hospital and released, police said this morning.

Police did not release the names of the woman and the man. Anyone with information about the incident can call Portage police at 329-4556 or Silent Observer at 343-2100.

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State orders woman to close day care center after inquiry

MT. MORRIS TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, October 14, 2006

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll

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MT. MORRIS TWP. - A home day care center run by Suzann Matthews at 1167 Knickerbocker Ave. was ordered closed by the state Friday following an investigation of her ability to supervise children.

Her authorization to care for kids ended at 6 p.m. Friday, and Matthews is required to tell parents her day care registration has been suspended.

The state Department of Human Services issued an advisory Friday saying it took emergency action to suspend her license to protect the welfare of children.

An investigation has been completed on a complaint about Matthews' care, but the state would not say what went wrong.

"I cannot provide any information other than what was in the advisory," said spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet.

Matthews, reached by The Journal at her home about 4 p.m. Friday, said she would not comment. Children could be heard in the background.

She can appeal the state's decision to suspend her license. In the meantime, she cannot accept children for child care at the home or anywhere else, the advisory said.

The complaint about Matthews came Thursday. The state's investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules on supervision of children, water hazards and water activities, and department notification of injury, accident, illness, death or fire.

Matthews has had a state child care license since March 10, 2003, and was registered to care for six children.

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Deadbeats might still be in the hunt with a license

Friend of Court doesn't always act after warning parents

LAPEER COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, October 14, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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LAPEER COUNTY - Don't return that hunter's orange jacket just yet - even if you are behind on your child support payments.

Friend of the Court offices in Lapeer and Shiawassee counties are warning hunters in letters this month that they might revoke the hunting licenses of deadbeat parents in advance of this year's deer season. The initiative has received widespread publicity in the past week.

But statewide, there's been more bark than bite in similar programs designed to force parents behind in their child support to get current or stay out of the woods.

Only about 300 licenses have been revoked statewide this year compared with a pool of hunting, fishing and ORV licenses that numbered more than 3 million in 2005. Plus, the time it takes to go through the suspension process makes carrying out the revocations an iffy proposition.

Lapeer County is joining in the optional program this year, and it's been used in Shiawassee County since 2002.

Shiawassee Friend of the Court Susan Thorman said the effort has been successful but it's hard to make the dire threat of losing a license reality for deer hunters.

"This is so labor-intensive to do," Thorman said. "You have to give 21 days' notice (and) you have to get a court order."

The process is even tougher because revocations only last through the current hunting season. "We do follow through. We don't lie" in the warning letters, Thorman said, but the fact that they are written doesn't usually result in a loss of license.

About 500 letters are being mailed this year to Shiawassee hunters behind in their child support. About 10 percent of warning letters end up in license revocation paperwork being forwarded to the state, Thorston said.

Letters typically tell parents that state law allows for parents to lose driving, sporting or recreational licenses until back child support is paid or a payment plan is arranged.

In Lapeer County, about one in six parents who pay child support have a recreational license such as deer licenses from the state Department of Natural Resources.

The Lapeer County Friend of the Court had identified 176 parents who are subject to the license revocations, said Emil H. Joseph Jr., Lapeer's FOC head.

QUICK TAKE

Losing your license

Friend of the Court offices in 25 counties in Michigan have suspended at least one hunting, fishing or off-road vehicle license of parents who have fallen behind on child support payments since Jan. 1, 2005.

- So far this year, 303 licenses have been revoked after action by a local Friend of the Court office. Last year, 455 licenses were revoked.

- In 2005, the state sold about 140,000 ORV licenses, 1.9 million hunting licenses, and 1.3 million fishing licenses.

Source: State Department of Natural Resources

It would be much easier if the state computer system identified the names of delinquent parents rather than the labor-intensive hand search of records that must be done now, Joseph said.

But recent publicity about the Lapeer program already brought in three hunters who contacted county officials ahead of the warning letters and want to negotiate to save their hunting privileges.

"Anytime someone wants to make satisfactory arrangements in advance of a (warning) letter, we're happy to do that," Joseph said.

DNR spokesman Richard Morsheck said the state files revocations in a statewide computer network as Friend of the Court offices file the necessary paperwork.

Twenty-five counties have sent such revocations through to the DNR in the past two years, Morsheck said, and a handful have been at it longer.

Genesee County does not use license revocations as leverage to push hunters into paying child support even though advocates say it works.

Thorston said her county will pursue revocation unless parents make arrangements to do better with their child support. If there's an effort to address delinquent payments, she said, the county won't push to yank the license.

"It's extremely successful," Thorman said. "Our priority is to let as many people as possible know this could happen."

Journal staff writer James L. Smith contributed to this report.

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Monday, OCT 16, 2006

Sustain ourselves

Two stories on page one of this issue are connected: The fathers being jailed for non-support payments and the urban farming story. The latter offers a glimpse at a solution to the former. It is up to us to connect the dots.

We agree fathers have a moral responsibility to feed, clothe and shelter their children.

We also believe that Attorney General Mike Cox's program hunting down and jailing fathers for failure to pay child support is punitive and more destructive to the family than helpful. It is the opposite of family values.

Michigan's failed economy has three-quarters of these dads with jobs paying less than \$10,000 a year. That is hardly enough to take care of one person, let alone a family, especially in a community that lacks adequate mass transit.

More unfortunate is the reality that while the fathers serve time behind bars for support arrears, their responsibility continues – in jail and deeper in debt.

The immediate response should be to get out and vote against Mike Cox and for Amos Williams. With letters and comments at public meetings, forums we must insist on help rather than jail time for those delinquent in child support payments.

As the article points out, there are states that have developed programs to assist fathers to move from unemployment and under employment into decent jobs. Wall Street frowns on full employment as detrimental to the market; the economy is structured to move along at less than full employment. There will never be enough jobs under the current system. The situation is worse than the officials let on: The government never counts the majority of the unemployed. Once a person stops applying for unemployment compensation they fall off the charts. So, if the prevailing system won't let us in the box, let's think and plan outside of their box.

Folk can create ways to sustain themselves and their families outside of the main stream. The urban gardening/farming program is just one example. Every time a restaurant opens in the city or even the suburbs, there is an immediate market for more parsley, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce – everything a gardener can grow. Look at all the land in Detroit. Factor in possible roof top gardens, plastic sheeted greenhouses, space in abandoned manufacturing plants and it is obvious, opportunity awaits.

We have to stop waiting on someone else's job to come our way and get busy to create our own livelihood.

North Carolina woman faces child support charge

CADILLAC - Tina Marie Quattlebaum of Denver, North Carolina was arraigned Friday on one count of child support - failing to pay in 84th District Court.

The 42-year-old faces up to four years in jail and/or \$2,000 fine for her alleged connection with events occurring between the dates of May 31, 2003 and Sept. 8, 2005 in Wexford County.

Bond was set at \$25,000 cash/surety and pretrial is 9 a.m. on Oct. 18.



Siblings ready for permanent home

Sunday, October 15, 2006

By Arn Shackelford

The Grand Rapids Press

Editor's note: This is another in a series of articles about special-need children available for adoption.

Twelve-year-old Destine and her brother, Bakarri, 7, have been in foster care for nearly two years, and they're more than ready for forever-parents and a permanent home where they can feel safe and put down roots.

Removed from their birth home because of severe neglect and abuse, the two children witnessed domestic violence and drug use and often were abandoned and left on their own for days at a time.

It was up to Destine -- pronounced Des-ti-nee -- to make sure little Bakarri -- Back-car-ee -- had enough to eat and got enough sleep.

Since education wasn't a priority in their home, she and her brother attended school only sporadically.

Which is why Destine, who's in the sixth grade, isn't doing as well as she could. According to the children's caseworker, she'd rather "be social and talk with her friends than focus on her classwork."

She can catch up but needs to learn to focus, needs to be encouraged and motivated to do better, the worker said.

In her spare time, Destine enjoys working on craft projects, drawing and doing puzzles. And since her father was Hispanic, she also likes to learn about the Hispanic culture and watch Hispanics -- or as she says, "people like me," entertain on television.

And she definitely wants to be placed with her brother, for whom she still feels responsible. She often has to be reminded to leave parenting to the adults.

In the first grade, Bakarri isn't faring so well, either. Although he was diagnosed earlier with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, his birth mother refused to give him medicine the doctor prescribed to counteract the problem.

He's taking it now, though, and while his foster mother says she hasn't noticed any big change, he's now doing his homework daily after school rather than procrastinating and doodling on his papers. That seems to be a change for the better, the worker said.

Bakarri likes school, playing basketball and soccer, coloring and eating dinner at buffet restaurants where he can get exactly what he wants and as much as he wants.

"And he loves tagging after his big sister, doing whatever she does," the worker added. "He really looks up to her. It's so cool to see."

Bakarri doesn't fully understand the concept of adoption, but his sister does. She's praying the worker will find the right home for them soon.

The worker will consider either a single- or two-parent home but is looking for a family where the parents will be able to give a lot of one-to-one attention to the kids and provide Bakarri a positive male role model.

Active children, they'd like parents who can be active with them, "not just sit around and watch TV," the worker said.

"These kids certainly aren't the hardest children I've ever tried to place, that's for sure. They're special."

If yours is the right family for two special children, if you can offer your home -- and your heart -- to Destine and Bakarri, call Diana DiTrappani, Muskegon Catholic Social Services, (231) 726-4735, or write to her at 1095 Third St., Suite 125, Muskegon, MI 49441.

Send e-mail to the author: yourlife@grpress.com

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Adoption agencies shun UK

Developing countries brand British safeguards as 'unsuitable' for children who need a family

Amelia Hill, culture and society correspondent

Sunday October 15, 2006

[The Observer](#)

Britons adopt fewer children from abroad than any other country because an increasing number of developing countries believe Britain is an unsuitable home, new research has revealed.

The study, which shows many countries are automatically rejecting applications from British families, comes in the wake of the controversy sparked by Madonna over her decision to adopt a child, 14-month-old David Banda, from Malawi. She had been granted an interim order by an African court allowing her to take David out of Malawi but, after being told his passport had yet to be processed, she returned to London last Friday without him. Her hopes of bringing him to England soon were further undermined by the announcement that the country's main children's rights group, Eye of the Child, has asked the government to delay the order until a new law is passed giving adopted children formal legal rights.

The difficulties faced by many Britons trying to adopt from abroad is causing them to turn to countries whose approach to the process is less rigorous, such as Guatemala and Bulgaria, raising questions about whether the children are being freely given up by their parents.

'Most other countries seeking children from overseas have individual agreements with the foreign governments, detailing the post-adoption care the children will receive,' said Dr Peter Selman, Britain's leading expert on overseas adoption and chairman of the Network for Intercountry Adoption, who presented his research in Barcelona last week.

Overseas adoption in Britain remained largely unorganised, unsupervised and unregulated until the Adoption Act in July 1999. However, experts say Britain still fails to take overseas adoptions seriously. 'The list of countries who now refuse to even consider applications from Britain is growing. If nothing changes, there is a real danger that the number of foreign children available to British families will dry up completely,' said Gill Haworth, director of the Intercountry Adoption Centre.

In Norway, the rate of foreign adoptions is 15 for every 100,000 people in the

country. In Spain it is 13, while Sweden took in more than 12. In Britain, however, the rate is 0.55.

According to Selman's research, increasing numbers of countries, including South Africa and India, refuse to consider any adoption application from Britain at all. 'The demand to adopt foreign children is so high that states looking to place children with overseas families can take their pick from countries across the world,' he said.

'The attitude these countries hold is quite correct: our procedures are embarrassingly under-developed. If I was a government wondering where to send my children, I would not touch a country that makes as little effort as Britain.'

Forced to go abroad

Stevan Whitehead and Elly Young adopted Ossie, aged nine, and Veronica, aged eight, from Guatemala seven years ago.

We tried to adopt domestically but were told in no uncertain terms by our local authority that we were too old: I was 38 years old and Elly was in her early forties. We decided to look abroad. We decided on Guatemala because they put children up for adoption who have been relinquished by their parents as well as those who have been abandoned. That distinction was important because we wanted children whose parents were still around, so we could be absolutely sure we were adopting kids who had been willingly given up.

The British end of the adoption was frustrating. Social workers had no idea how to prepare us. In addition, we spent years facing down insinuations from social workers that we were trying to do something that was not approved of.

Bringing up children from another country is a complex thing. I think we have been successful: the children are very aware that they don't look like us but they find this interesting and amusing rather than disturbing. We go to Guatemala as often as possible, and spent four weeks in Guatemala this summer.

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Grandma fights for granddaughter's custody

Updated: Oct 13, 2006 06:27 PM EDT

By ANNE SCHIEBER

GRAND RAPIDS - A grandmother spent a full day in court Friday trying to get custody of her grandchild instead of the child's foster parents.

Judge Kathleen Feeney was trying to determine if the state acted properly in determining the foster parents, who have had the child for a year-and-a-half, would make better adoptive parents than the grandmother.

The grandmother, Sally Borghese, had no idea what to expect today when Feeney closed the hearing to the media and Borhese's supporters.

According to Borghese, her case began to unravel after her daughter lost parental rights and an independent family agency intervened. She claims she took care of her granddaughter most of the time her daughter was dealing with alcoholism and mental illness. She and her supporters say there has never been any evidence of abuse or neglect.

The judge ordered Borghese supporters not to discuss the case. They did have plenty to say about why they think such cases end up in disputes in the first place. They claim the state gets more money from the federal government.

"If they put a child with parents or relatives, they don't get the money," said Nancy Luckhurst of the Foundation for Children's Rights. "That's why they put them in foster care, in group homes and with therapeutic foster care, rather than with relatives. They find any excuse not to put them with relatives. This is wrong."

State welfare officials deny that's why they split up families.

The one public file on the case does not discuss Borghese specifically, but it does contain orders for the Borghese to keep her granddaughter away from the birth mother.

One of Borghese's supporters is Darlene King, another grandmother in an adoption fight. She believes Borghese faces a tough road in the state's child welfare agency.

"You have to prove that they are arbitrary and capricious," King said, "and that's a hard thing to do."

The hearing is expected to continue Wednesday. Judge Feeney will have 30 days to make her decision.



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Published October 15, 2006

E-visitation may connect parents, kids

In divorce cases, bill sees need for high-tech tools

By Andrea Byl
Capital News Service

For children and teens with divorced parents, e-mail, instant messaging and video cams could become tools for communicating more with their noncustodial parents.

A bill in the state Legislature would authorize courts to grant "electronic visitation" in addition to face-to-face parenting time.

The bill's primary sponsor, Republican Tom Pearce of Rockford, said electronic communication can strengthen the relationship between a parent and a child.

"I'm 100 percent convinced that two parents can do a better job of raising kids than one," Pearce said.

"We have all this technology at our disposal. It's time we use it."

Ingham County Circuit Judge George Economy said he already encourages electronic communication in divorce cases.

"The child may always initiate, within reason, a phone call to the other parent, and the other parent cannot block it," Economy said, adding that other children communicate through e-mail.

Electronic communication should be in addition to face time, he said.

"What I've found over the years is that kids need as much contact with their parents as possible," he said. "And obviously if someone abuses it, I would step in."

Pearce said the bill has support from both Republicans and Democrats, but one legislator declined to sponsor it because she believed it could create more animosity between divorced parents.

About the bill

- The bill defines electronic visitation as communication between a parent and child by e-mail, instant messaging, video conferencing, Webcam, or any other communication device that uses the Internet.
- The legislation would require the noncustodial parent to pay for the equipment.
- You can read the full text of House bill 6452 at www.michiganlegislature.org. It has been referred to the House Family and Children Services Committee.

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This shouldn't be a factor, said David Sarnacki, a family law attorney in Grand Rapids who has been mediating divorces for 15 years.

"If people want to cause problems, they will find a way to do that with this law or any other laws," he said.

Electronic communications are already being used, though not court mandated, he said.

He cited two cases in which one parent moved out of state.

The parents had to decide whether they would need computers, scanners and other electronic tools, he said.

Robert Gardella, a family law attorney in Brighton, emphasized the importance of dealing with each case individually.

"There cannot be any absolutes in family law cases because each family is different, each child is different," he said.

"The most common reason a child doesn't follow through with communication is that the custodial parent doesn't allow the child to do what the court has ordered," he said.

It often has to be resolved in court.

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Nonprofit shelter prepares to help Macomb's homeless

Poverty ranks grow in county

BY DAN CORTEZ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

October 15, 2006

Phones ring all day at Solid Ground, a faith-based nonprofit in Roseville that distributes food and other services to homeless families and seniors.

There is a growing need for such services throughout Macomb County. U.S. Census figures show that the number of county residents living in poverty jumped from 44,000 in 2000 to 71,000 in 2005.

Solid Ground is preparing to meet the demand with a 10,000-square-foot shelter on 11 Mile that will house homeless families.

The 46-bed shelter should be ready for occupancy by the end of the year, but Solid Ground is to introduce it to the community at an open house this afternoon. The new shelter is in the building that once housed the Red Cross. The goal of Solid Ground is to provide housing for up to two years for homeless families and to help them develop skills that will help them get out on their own.

The plan is to take in families slowly over the next year until capacity is reached. The shelter has 15 bedrooms, some adjoining so family members can be housed close together. Many shelters house men and women separately.

"The current shelter system, although excellent, is not really set up to handle families as a unit, where the mother and father live together with the children," Frank Tenkel, 68, the construction coordinator, said last week. "The objective here is to provide an environment where they can live together as family."

Solid Ground gets some funding through government grants, but most of its money comes from private donations. The money is put toward distributing groceries, toiletries and bus passes. The group started in 2001, when Dee McCardle, a Roseville resident, heard from her church group that shelters for the homeless couldn't meet the needs of residents.

McCardle, 59, said there were more homeless than existing facilities could handle, and many still were unable to live independently after a short time in a shelter. "We saw that there was the need for those who had completed their time at previous shelters."



Joe Rodie of Eastpointe cuts rods to hang gas pipes for Solid Ground in a building that once housed the Red Cross in Roseville.

To go, to donate

What: Open house at Solid Ground

When: 3-5 p.m. today

Where: 17955 E. Eleven Mile in Roseville

For information or to make a donation, call Solid Ground at 586-772-3604, 9-4 weekdays and 9-2 Saturdays. Checks should be made payable to Solid Ground Inc. and sent to the group at: 17955 E. Eleven Mile, Roseville 48066

The construction would have cost about \$1 million, but union workers from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 58 and Plumbers Local 98 donated much of the work.

Tenkel estimates it will cost Solid Ground \$20 to \$25 per day for each person at the shelter.

Contact **DAN CORTEZ** at 586-469-1827 or dcortez@freepress.com.

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10-year-old boy could face sexual assault charges

BY KORIE WILKINS
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

October 16, 2006

A 10-year-old Highland Township boy could be charged in juvenile court this week after a 5-year-old girl reported that he sexually assaulted her on a school bus.

Lt. David Pement of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office's Highland Township substation said the boy -- a fifth-grade student -- was riding the bus Sept. 18 when he asked the kindergartner to touch his groin area. She refused and he grabbed her hand and put it there anyway, Pement said.

The girl told her parents. On Sept. 20, Pement said, the boy made the same request on the bus and the girl again refused, but some adults intervened and stopped the activity.

The boy has been suspended from Brooks Elementary School in the Huron Valley School District, pending the outcome of the case, Pement said.

Janet Roberts, spokeswoman for the district, declined to comment on the matter. She said the district encourages children to report incidents.

She said incidents on buses are rare, but "we're bothered that any happen at all."

Deborah Carley, chief deputy Oakland County prosecutor, said the case would be reviewed this week for possible charges.

Earlier this year, a 13-year-old girl was groped at a Rochester Hills park by four boys. Two of them, age 11, confessed and were ordered to undergo counseling. The other two, age 9, were not charged because of their age.

Cindy Bridgman, director of intervention and treatment at CARE House in Pontiac, said from January through June of this year, 41 of 560 cases seen in the facility have involved children being assaulted by children younger than 13. The Pontiac facility counsels victims of child abuse.

"It's very disturbing," Bridgman said. "The concern is, where did these children learn this behavior? Typically, it's not a normal development behavior."

"It's quite possible that the abusive child could have been similarly abused."

Contact **KORIE WILKINS** at 248-351-5186 or kwilkins@freepress.com.

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Monday, OCT 16, 2006

Customers, workers angry as water bills skyrocket



Ada Gary shows her water bill outside the customer payment center on Grand River Sept. 1. PHOTO BY DIANE BUKOWSKI

By Diane Bukowski
The Michigan Citizen

DETROIT — As Detroit's water department converts to monthly billing, and implementation of a water affordability plan faces delays, customers say they are being hit with huge estimated bills, and are receiving little assistance to avoid shut-off.

Union officials representing the department's 12 meter readers say that no new staff has been hired to read meters monthly instead of quarterly. They add that conversion to an automated reading process under a controversial \$154.2 million contract to replace all Detroit meters will take up to four years, leaving customers suffering in the meantime.

"I think it's messed up, really messed up," said Ada Gary outside the water bill payment center on Grand River and Winthrop, showing a bill for \$1,079.50. "People can't hardly eat for paying their water bill."

Gary said when she asked for help at the center, they told her the water affordability plan, which the city finally agreed to this summer after four years of battles, wasn't in place yet.

Juanita Pope said her bill had gone from \$147 one month to over \$1,000 the next month.

"I ain't got but two people in my house, and there ain't that much flushing in the world," she said. "With the garbage fee and car insurance rates, I just moved out the city."

Shelley Thomas, a laid-off Daimler Chrysler worker who is a single mother, said her bill was up to \$1200 because the department claimed she had been undercharged due to a faulty meter that they later replaced.

"How do they know I've been undercharged?" she asked angrily.

Emily Kunze, president of Local 2920 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), said, "We have 12 people to read 260,000 meters every month. It's absolutely impossible. Our meter readers are being used and abused, and the rate payers are paying more for less service. The community should be outraged."

She added that to add insult to injury, customer service staff which handles bill

complaints has been cut because of recent unnecessary lay-offs in the department. The water department is an enterprise agency which does not face a deficit. It recently enacted substantial rate increases, including a special sewage increase, allegedly to compensate for delinquent bill payers in Detroit.

Meter readers interviewed at the Local 2920 office said estimated readings are "never fair," and frequently much higher than actual readings. They said that customers are no longer allowed to read their own meter and send in cards, because the department claimed that customers were faking the amounts.

Even when a worker reads the meter, they said that if the amount is not what the main office claims it should be, they are sent back two or three times to read it again.

They said the department will not make corrections to the estimate or change the meter.

"The Department is not going to hire more meter readers," said George Ellenwood, spokesman for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. "We've now started the contract to replace all residential and commercial meters."

That contract, CM-2007, is with the Detroit Meter Team, comprised of prime contractors Walbridge Aldinger and Weiss Construction, which are firms based in the Detroit area but doing business nationally. Hale Contracting is the "minority-owned" partner.

According to minutes from the Dec. 14 Board of Water Commissioners meeting where the contract was approved, \$192 million of capital improvement funds are actually being set aside to cover costs of the contract.

Ellenwood confirmed that there would be a four-year transition period, with 80,000 new meters out of 285,000 to be installed beginning the fall of 2007. Ellenwood said the department has been alternating actual bills with estimated bills in the interim, and that the first bills of the summer were "transitional" bills and reflected higher rates than will continue to be seen.

He said only part of the water affordability plan for low-income Detroiters is in place. Residential customers have recently been notified that they will be charged an additional \$1 per month unless they send in an "opt-out" card. He said to date 29,000 customers out of 285,000 have opted out of the plan.

But he added that current donations from the plan will go into an already existing account under the WAVE program, which customers can sign up for at their local Department of Human Services offices.

The full plan was delayed until the Board of Water Commissioners finally agreed with the Detroit City Council to hire consultant and water affordability plan expert Roger Colton to develop it. He said \$5 million in up-front funding contributed by DWSD itself is being held until a third-party administrator of the plan is chosen.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Report details how we are doing

Assessment gauges socioeconomic health of Washtenaw County

Sunday, October 15, 2006

BY LIZ COBBS

News Staff Reporter

The Washtenaw County Human Services Community Collaborative has published a comprehensive report called the Community Needs Assessment that details findings on the socio-economic health of Washtenaw County.

Scholl discussed the Community Needs Assessment in a recent interview. The collaborative is made up of mental health, public health, social services, education, and court representatives, as well as consumers, advocates and private agencies and foundations. The HSCC provides policies and funding that affect services for children, families and adults in Washtenaw County. The state requires every county to have such a collaborative.

Question. What is the Community Needs Assessment?

Answer. It's a compilation of reports and data that measure and track how we're doing as a county. It's intended to mark where we're headed as a community. We structured it so that it will be a biennial report, so that every two years we can come back and measure our progress.

Q. Has a Community Needs Assessment been done before?

A. The last one I'm aware of is 13 years ago. So, a new one was really needed. The timing of the (new) assessment coincided with the HSCC looking at how we can be more proactive in the community and with the Washtenaw United Way (an HSCC member) looking into doing a community needs assessment.

Q. What areas does the Community Needs Assessment focus on?

A. It looks at community and economic development, health, education, environment and community connection.

Q. What were some of the findings?

A. The findings were comprehensive. One thing we found is we don't measure and track our progress very well in the things we do. We also did a perception survey as part of the needs assessment. (Survey respondents were asked what they saw as major issues for Washtenaw County residents). I think some of the things we already knew. We knew there were issues related to affordable housing. There's also issues related to education, like the dropout rates. We knew there wasn't good data on it, but we put it in anyway because we want to start collecting more data in the future. There's issues we're having with racial disparity for juvenile arrests, child poverty rates and child abuse and neglect. One thing that stood out to me is homelessness has decreased. Part of it, I think, is that the community came together and made an investment in the Delonis Shelter. That's not to suggest that we shouldn't continue working on the homelessness problem, but we should be emboldened that our actions have had an effect on the community.

Q. Is this information available to the public?

A. Yes. Anyone who's interested can get a copy of the report. We're having a plenary session for the community on Nov. 14, and it's open to everybody.

Q. What will you do at the

session?

A. What we're trying to do is create a dynamic process where people can come together, look at the data and suggest strategies and identify priority areas for the community. For example, if our trend is asthma increased with children, then we can look at the trend line and try to come up with a strategy to address that directly. After two years, when we get the next report, we can look at the data to see if we've changed. The HSCC plays a valuable role in the community. Essentially, the community collaborative is the glue to kind of pull everything together to make the connections.

Q. Are there changes planned for the HSCC?

A. In January, we will be dropping the "Human Services" part of the name and we will be the "Community Collaborative of Washtenaw County." Part of the reason for doing that is we want to cast a wider net.

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Focus: HOPE leader gets national honor

She co-founded civil rights group in wake of 1967 riots, is recognized for humanitarian efforts.

Gordon Trowbridge / Detroit News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- It's one in a long list of honors for Detroit's Eleanor Josaitis, but the longtime leader of Focus: HOPE says an award she'll receive here on Tuesday has special meaning.

Josaitis, whose leadership made Focus: HOPE a wide-ranging civil rights, anti-poverty and job training organization, will be inducted into the Hall of Fame of Caring Americans by the National Caring Institute, a group formed two decades ago to honor leading U.S. humanitarians.

"To have someone say, 'It's about caring' -- that's been my passion all along," Josaitis said. "I do care, about civil rights, about hunger, about people, and that makes this an honor I'm really proud of."

The awards, in their 19th year, are aimed at "identifying extraordinarily gifted people and holding them up as role models," according to the National Caring Institute, the Washington organization that sponsors the program.

Six other adults and six teenagers will be honored Tuesday. They include the Rev. Billy Graham and retired baseball star Cal Ripken Jr. Six teenagers from across the country will be honored with youth awards; all will be inducted into the Caring Hall of Fame, part of a museum honoring civil rights pioneer Frederick Douglass. Past winners include author Maya Angelou and actor Paul Newman.

Josaitis co-founded Focus: HOPE in the wake of Detroit's 1967 riots, hoping to address the poverty and other social problems the riots had violently exposed. The group now operates tens of millions of dollars in programs, including anti-hunger efforts that feed more than 40,000 people a month, job training and child care.

"She gave deeply of herself to move her family back to the city after the Detroit riots," said Richard Brennan, director of the National Caring Institute. "She's built a tremendous organization to serve that community."

Josaitis left day-to-day management of the organization this year.

Josaitis said receiving national recognition is an opportunity to share Focus: HOPE's lessons with others. "For me to be recognized says even more and more people are going to know about what Focus: HOPE does," she said. "If we can share what we know with other states and other communities, that's something to take advantage of."

More information is available on the institute's Web site, www.caring-institute.org.

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